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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 3 December 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. GANEV	(Bulgaria)
later:	Mr. MOUMIN (Vice-President)	(Comoros)

- The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General [35]
- Tentative programme of work
- The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General [35] (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 35

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/672, A/47/673 and A/47/716)

The PRESIDENT: Before the General Assembly begins its consideration of agenda item 35 this afternoon, I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at 5.30 p.m.

If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. RICHARDSON (United Kingdom): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Community and its member States.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, the Middle East has remained a focus of attention and concern. We have witnessed what we hope are important steps on the path towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question, but, until a political solution is found, the situation of the Palestinians will continue to be a matter of concern.

We have seen some improvement in the situation in Lebanon, but there has been a worrying outbreak of attacks in the south Lebanon border region in recent months.

The aftermath of the Gulf war also cast its shadow over the region, and border disputes between States in the region have added to the tensions.

Prospects for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question were improved significantly with the launching of the Middle East peace process last year in Madrid, in which all parties directly involved are

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

participating. The European Community and its member States are fully committed to playing a constructive and active part in the peace process.

We continue to be guided by the principles that have long governed our position: these are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace, the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to live within secure and recognized boundaries and the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

Our position on issues relating to the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, is equally well known. We reaffirm the significance of Jerusalem, Holy City of three religions, and of the importance of freedom of access for all to the places of worship there.

A comprehensive settlement should, in our view, encompass all these principles, but it is for the parties involved in the current negotiating process to decide how they should be put into practice on the ground.

The European Community and its member States welcome the improvement in the situation in Lebanon and the formation of a new Government under Mr. Rafiq Hariri. We stress the importance of the full and strict implementation of the Taif agreements by all parties concerned, thus bringing about the complete restoration of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of a Lebanon free of all foreign interference and all foreign troops.

We stress once again the need for implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which, inter alia, calls upon Israel to respect Lebanese territorial integrity and to withdraw its forces to the internationally recognized border.

We reaffirm our support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, to which the States members of the European Community contribute three

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

contingents. We deplore any actions which endanger the lives and safety of personnel serving with that force.

We remain committed to prompt and full implementation of all Security Council resolutions concerning Iraq. We welcome the sustained efforts of the Security Council to this effect, but, as was made clear during last week's Security Council meeting with the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, much remains to be done, particularly on weapons of mass destruction, and there are disturbing signs that Iraq continues to claim Kuwait as its nineteenth province.

The Iraqi regime carries full responsibility for the deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the country. It has not yet agreed to implement Security Council resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991), which would contribute to improving the living conditions of the civilian population in the whole country. It has maintained a blockade against the Kurdish governorates in the north and the marshes in the south. For four months this last summer, Iraq prevaricated over renewing the Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations.

We fully support the United Nations Inter-Agency Programme for the region, and have made significant cash and in-kind contributions, both at Community and national levels. We consider that the most effective way to help the civilian population is by acting in close cooperation with the United Nations effort.

We acknowledge the right of countries to acquire the means to defend themselves, and we are aware of the sophisticated weaponry which is all too readily available for sale. Nevertheless, we strongly hope that Iran and other countries in the region will keep in mind the importance of avoiding excessive arms procurement, which might pose a threat to regional peace and

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

stability. We also hope that Iran will take a more constructive approach to the peace process.

The European Community and its member States believe that, given Iran's importance in the region, they should continue to pursue a dialogue with Iran; but this should be a critical dialogue, and one which encourages Iran to improve its behaviour in a number of fields, including human rights, the continued death sentence against the author Salman Rushdie, and terrorism.

We should not forget the effects of the Iran-Iraq conflict, which are still felt in the region. We wish to stress the importance of the full implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987).

Allow me to conclude by expressing the hope that all border disputes in the region will be resolved peacefully by the parties concerned, and by underlining once more the commitment of the European Community and its member States to contributing their share to bringing about lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. AL-SUWAIDI (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): I have the honour to begin my statement on behalf of the United Arab Emirates by thanking the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his two reports to the General Assembly on the situation in the Middle East. Discussion of the Middle East problem after the debate on the question of Palestine is a natural course of events in view of the close link between the two issues. The question of Palestine is the very substance and basis of the problem of the Middle East. One cannot separate the one from the other or settle either question in isolation from the other. Experience shows that this cannot be done.

Failure to settle the question of Palestine in conformity with General Assembly resolutions and international law has enabled Israel to repeat its aggression against the Arab States and to occupy parts of their territories and even annex some of those territories, such as the Holy City of Al-Quds and the Syrian Golan Heights.

In the absence of international deterrence and because the Security Council, which is the executive body that has the authority to enforce the will of the international community, has not imposed sanctions on Israel, the Israeli authorities felt that they had a free hand to perpetuate their aggression against the Arab States time and time again, to expel Arab citizens from the occupied territories, to build settlements in those occupied territories, to impose upon Palestinian and other Arab citizens all manner of oppression, arbitrary acts and indignities, and to promulgate laws and regulations with a view to annexing some of those Arab territories.

The Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates in his statement during the general debate spoke of the fundamental changes that have taken place in international affairs, and which have been reflected in the manner whereby the

(Mr. Al-Suwaidi, United Arab Emirates)

international community deals with international issues and regional problems with a greater degree of understanding of their nature and implications and of the means of containing and resolving them. We would have thought that it was natural that the effects of such changes should be felt in our Arab region and that it was only natural that they should lead to a new sense of responsibility and a new approach in dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict that would have reflected awareness of the need to solve the problem and, thereby, to establish a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

We would have thought that it was self-evident that it was no longer possible to neglect this region, given its importance and its sensitivity, and the consequences of the Arab-Israeli conflict with regard to international peace and security and that it was imperative to work seriously for putting an end to the problem by peaceful settlement on line with the accelerating tendency to resolve other regional problems. Indeed, it was on that basis that the peace conference was convened in Madrid and led to the ongoing bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

Bringing peace to the Middle East is a matter of vital importance, not only to our region but to the world at large. We should not forget in this respect the five wars that were unleashed in our region and that came very close to involving other Powers in the conflict. For these and many other reasons, the United Arab Emirates has participated in the multilateral negotiations and welcomed the recent invitation to the United Nations to participate in the negotiations as a full and principal party. We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General has appointed a Special Representative in all aspects of these negotiations. We attach special importance to participation by the United Nations and consider such participation to be an important and

(Mr. Al-Suwaidi, United Arab Emirates)

positive element in the context of the ongoing negotiations, for the following reasons:

First, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) constitute the foundation of the said negotiations.

Secondly, the present unanimous view that the United Nations plays the principal role in containing conflicts in various parts of the world, such as the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Cambodia, El Salvador and others, and that it is the United Nations that shoulders this responsibility should apply in the case of the Middle East, where the United Nations should be charged with the same task in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Thirdly, the fact that the United Nations has gained vast experience in our region, especially with regard to peace-keeping forces and the role of international observers. As a matter of fact, the first peace-keeping forces were created for the Middle East.

A review of Israel's conduct in the ongoing bilateral negotiations is not cause for much optimism regarding the prospects of reaching a speedy settlement to the various aspects of the situation in the Middle East. Although a year has passed since the beginning of the negotiations, no observer who has followed the talks would have any grounds for feeling that a settlement to the problem is at hand. The reason is Israel's refusal to accept the principle of land for peace because Israel is wedded to the concepts of hegemony, of dictat and of expansion.

My country believes that the settlement that is needed must be based on international legality that emanates from the principles of the Charter, the rules of international law and the resolutions adopted by the principal organs of the United Nations.

(Mr. Al-Suwaidi, United Arab Emirates)

In order for such a settlement to be achieved, two requirements should be met: complete withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, our purpose in speaking of these immutable principles is not to prejudge the failure of the current negotiations but to underscore these prerequisites with a view to ensuring the negotiations' success which can be achieved only if a greater role is played by the co-sponsors of the negotiations side by side with greater and more effective participation by the international community in monitoring the peace process and moving it forward with a view to achieving the results we hope for and for which our future generations will hold us accountable.

Mr. AL-NI'MAH (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): During the debate on this item at the last session, some delegations voiced a measure of cautious optimism with respect to the possibility of moving forward towards a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, which, is the core issue of the Middle East conflict, as recognized in numerous resolutions on the item "The situation in the Middle East", the most recent of which was resolution 46/82.

While there has been no concrete successes over the past year, we have not lost our belief in the peace process. We continue to hope it will eventually yield a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ongoing negotiations should bear fruit and attain the goals to which we aspire after all the conflict and turmoil that overshadowed the Middle East and shrouded it in the gloom of rigidity and intransigence, and that for years have embroiled the region in unending strife, without a glimmer of hope.

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

When that glimmer did pierce the gloom, through the beginning of the current negotiations, the need for support and assistance by the international community became quite apparent if the negotiations were to achieve the desired outcome, namely the establishment of peace with justice. In all this, account should be taken of the concessions made by the Arab side. Those concessions are well known to all who have followed the negotiations. The Arab and Palestinian parties have contributed with understanding and vision to the prevailing international thinking, and have made valuable concessions that would not have been possible in the past.

The overriding consideration in making such concessions has been the desire to achieve a just and comprehensive peace. There is no doubt that the Arab side's motive in making all those concessions was and continues to be its resolve to reach the desired goal: peace, recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination on its own territory, and Israel's complete withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories.

This desire which motivated the Arab concessions, has not been met with the proper response from Israel. The notion of compromise is completely alien to Israel's thinking. Consequently, it persists in its policy of annexation and settlements in contravention of all international norms and laws. Where are the Israeli concessions that are required for successful negotiation? When we use the world "concessions" we must not forget that refraining from illegal practices and the abandoning of illegal policies, something that Israel has not done so far, cannot be termed "concession" in the true sense of the word. As for withdrawal from the occupied territories and recognition of the Palestinian people's right of self-determination, no one in his right mind can claim that these would be "concessions" on the part of Israel.

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

International law prohibits the occupation of the territory of others by force, and withdrawal from such territories is thus an obligation on the part of the occupier. Moreover, the right of self-determination is a fundamental principle of international law that is applicable in all cases.

Therefore, Israel's agreement to meet these Arab demands cannot be viewed as a "concession" in any sense. We hope that this confusion about definitions will be eliminated from the peace process, so that the peace process can move towards its desired goal.

Israel's occupation by force of the Arab territories has not merely created daily suffering for the inhabitants; it has also created an environment full of all sorts of repression.

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

Israel's occupation by force of the occupied Arab territories not only makes the daily lives of the inhabitants of those territories a sort of daily hell but also creates an environment that teems with every type of complicated situation that overtaxes the ability of people to cope with the very business of living. As a matter of fact, Israel's excesses not only breach international law and flout the international will but also ridicule the very concept of international legality. Thus, a tragic situation exists that is a sad commentary on the present status of international norms.

The inhabitants of the territories have begun to lose faith in the existence of any international norms or laws, as a result of Israel's contempt for such things. In its arrogance and intoxication with power Israel pursues the policy of fait accompli, occupies the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon, goes on building settlements in all the occupied territories, enacts laws to annex Arab Al-Quds and to alter its Islamic and Arab character and uses military force to suppress the holy Palestinian intifadah and to occupy the Golan Heights and inflict suffering upon the Syrian and Arab inhabitants.

Israel has invaded Arab Lebanon and trampled the dignity of the inhabitants of the southern villages. It flexes its muscles and follows the law of force in southern Lebanon, meting out punishment to its inhabitants. Israel rides rough shod over the land and persists in pursuing a policy of persecution, humiliation and the infliction of indignity and deprivation. It is indifferent to the results of its oppressive policy, which is destroying the fabric of life of the Arab Palestinians and depriving them of their right to lead a decent sort of life on the economic, social and political levels. By indulging in all these practices, Israel violates international norms and

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

laws; contravenes United Nations resolutions, first and foremost of which are the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Israel's persistence in its settlement policy in the West Bank and the Syrian Arab Golan is irrefutable evidence of its excesses. That policy reveals Israel's expansionist goal of swallowing up and annexing the occupied Arab territories. Israel's prevarication and procrastination in discussions about ending its occupation and drawing up a proper arrangement for its withdrawal from those territories and the obstacles it continues to erect on the path of the negotiations, holding them hostage to its impossible conditions, is preventing the achievement of the desired goal.

Notwithstanding all these misgivings and the difficulties encountered in the negotiating process, we continue to believe in its importance and its feasibility. On the basis of that optimism and in our belief in progress towards peace, we salute the efforts of the American Administration and its meritorious contribution to that progress. We appeal to the new American Administration to continue the good offices and to exert greater efforts in order that the forward progress may lead to the desired goal, to which we all aspire, namely, a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We view United Nations participation in the negotiations on the Middle East as vital to maintaining progress and continuity. We salute here the efforts by the General Assembly and those of the Secretary-General to bring peace and justice in the region. We also commend the Secretary-General's initiative in appointing a Special Representative. We hope that the new Israeli Government will be helpful and flexible in achieving the hoped-for goal.

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

We fully appreciate the suffering of the inhabitants of southern Lebanon, who have borne the brunt of Israeli occupation for a long time and have been forced to leave hearth and home and turned into displaced persons, along with the half million Syrian Arabs who have been driven from their villages and towns in the Golan Heights. We are optimistic that the new Government in Lebanon will work to make progress in Lebanese reconciliation and achieve all constructive national goals. In the near future, we hope to see Lebanon one unified country, with peace and security for all the communities of that fraternal country.

Those who follow the unfolding situation in the Middle East cannot help but note with extreme concern the many regional conflicts and disputes among the States of the area.

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

Therefore the continuation and the repetition of such suffering are what jeopardize international peace and security once more. Proceeding from this premise, we maintain that the peaceful means, enshrined in the Charter, of resolving conflicts amongst all States - large and small, strong and weak - through negotiations or international law are the only means of reaching solutions to all these conflicts and disputes in the region. We do hope that the States of the region will in the near future reach such desired solutions so that the Middle East may become an area of understanding, cooperation and solidarity between States, in the interest of the peoples of that region and of their future generations.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members that, on Tuesday, 8 December, in the morning, in addition to considering agenda items 36, "The situation in Central America", and 48, "Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1995", the Assembly will also consider the draft resolution submitted under agenda item 40, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council", and contained in document A/47/L.26, as the last item.

AGENDA ITEM 35 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/672, A/47/673 and A/47/716)

Mr. YAHYA (Malaysia): The Middle East region has witnessed important developments during the past year, notably the launching of the peace process by the Madrid Conference and the initiation of bilateral and multilateral negotiations involving the various parties concerned in the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Unfortunately, despite these developments, the conflict in the Middle East remains unresolved. It

(Mr. Yahya, Malaysia)

can therefore be said that, as a whole, the concept of collective security as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations has yet to take firm roots in the maintenance and restoration of international and regional peace and security.

Malaysia is deeply concerned at the volatile situation in the region resulting from continued Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land, the Syrian Golan and other Arab territories. Israel's aggressive policy and expansionist practices in the region constitute a dangerous threat to the peace and security of the region and beyond. In his recent report, dated 19 November 1992, on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the Secretary-General stated:

> "Despite the present quiet in the Israel-Syria sector, the situation in the Middle East as a whole continues to be potentially dangerous and is likely to remain so, unless and until a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem can be reached. I continue to hope that determined efforts will be made by all concerned to tackle the problem in all its aspects, with a view to arriving at a just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973)." (S/24821, para. 20)

The situation remains dangerous, and the long-standing problem of Palestine remains as the core of the conflict in the Middle East. My delegation earlier stressed, in our statement to the Assembly on 30 November 1992, that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region would not be achieved without the full exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and until Israel makes an immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including

(Mr. Yahya, Malaysia)

Jerusalem, and other occupied territories. The Palestinian people have suffered too long under the oppressive Israeli military occupation. We believe that justice is due to the Palestinian people, and it is our earnest hope that current developments in the region will bring about the realization of the Palestinian people's long-cherished goal of a sovereign and independent State.

During the debate on this item at the General Assembly last year, we joined other delegations in expressing our high hopes and expectations that the Middle East peace talks which started in Madrid at that time could produce the desired results by resolving the many problems in the region. In welcoming the Madrid Middle East peace process, we fully appreciate that it will not be an easy process. The fact that all sides are recognizing the opportunities provided by the current peace process is in itself a success, but a great deal of encouragement is required. In this regard, the involvement of countries outside the region is important, as they can provide assurance when there are doubts and impetus when any lack of progress threatens to stall the process.

My delegation believes that any approach to a solution of the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict should be comprehensive. A proposal for settlement cannot address only some of the causes of the conflict to the exclusion of others. In this regard, my delegation is of the view that the peace conference should seek a speedy implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which have long been recognized as the cornerstone of a comprehensive settlement.

The crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict has long been Israel's persistent refusal even to consider ending its illegal occupation of the Palestinian,

(Mr. Yahya, Malaysia)

Syrian Golan and other Arab territories and to recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Israel's defiant policy of building settlements and aggressive expansion threatens to transform irreversibly the demographic, cultural and social make-up of the occupied territories. Israel must unconditionally halt the establishment of any new settlement and provide guarantees for the dismantling of the existing ones. In this regard, it is essential that all parties involved in the issue of Jewish immigration to the Arab territories occupied since 1967 - particularly those countries that are the main sources of such immigration and financial assistance to boost settlements - understand the risks and negative implications of continuing such practices, which will certainly undermine the ongoing peace process. We wish to urge the General Assembly and the Security Council to address with urgency and firmness the question of illegal Jewish settlements and confiscation of Palestinian properties, as well as that of the protection and safety of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Indeed, neither the General Assembly nor the Security Council must be allowed to be immobilized because of the ongoing peace process on the Middle East.

Despite the constructive attitudes and sense of responsibility demonstrated by the Arab parties to the negotiations, Israel continues to raise obstacles on the path to peace and to perpetuate aggressive acts and exactions against its Arab neighbours and against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, in violation of international laws and conventions.

(Mr. Yahya, Malaysia)

We call upon Israel to accept the inevitable trend of history and make its contribution to the ongoing search for peace by according the right of self-determination to the Palestinian people, by unconditionally withdrawing from all occupied territories, by observing international treaties and conventions and by implementing United Nations resolutions and decisions. These essential elements form the foundation upon which to build a durable structure for justice and peace in the Middle East.

My delegation wishes to reiterate that the issue of the city of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) cannot be excluded from the ongoing Middle East peace talks, as it constitutes an integral part of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. It is regrettable that, after six rounds of bilateral negotiations, attempts to exclude the issue of Jerusalem from the peace process are still being made. Malaysia firmly believes that the issue of Jerusalem should receive due attention in the agenda of the peace conference.

There are two aspects of the question of Jerusalem to be resolved in the current Middle East process. The first involves the question of the Muslim part of Jerusalem, occupied by Israel since 1967, which should be an important item on the agenda of the Middle East peace process, constituting part of Palestinian territories occupied by Israel. The second aspect involves the special status of Jerusalem for Muslims, Christians and Jews. Hence this question has to be resolved not only between Israel and the Palestinians but also with the involvement of the international community within the context of the current Middle East peace process.

We urge the new Israeli Government to be more forthcoming in moving forward the peace process. Israel's gesture on entering into substantive discussion on Palestinian rights and applying to the Golan Heights the concept

(Mr. Yahya, Malaysia)

of territorial compromise, inherent in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), seems encouraging. However, despite all these positive developments, my delegation is deeply concerned over not only the continuing, but in some cases increasing, repressive actions by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people. We fear that the harsh measures adopted by the Israeli security forces will undermine and threaten the peace process. The policy of confiscating Palestinian land and water resources, closure of schools and other unjust acts only create fear and resentment.

It is imperative that the new Israeli Government take the necessary measures to bring about confidence-building if the talks are to produce the desired outcome of mutual benefit to all concerned. This will, however, depend on Israel's agreement to end its military rule in the occupied territories, allow for the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people with sincerity and a clear time frame, transfer authority to the Palestinians and move towards the return of the occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands. In this connection, the United Nations should be able to assist in the transition process, as it is doing in its activities in resolving regional disputes elsewhere.

Malaysia believes that the United Nations has a useful role to play, being in a unique position and having the resources and successful experience in helping to resolve regional disputes in recent years in various regions of the world. We are convinced of the need to resolve the various interrelated aspects of the conflict and its multilateral dimension through a comprehensive negotiated settlement to be achieved through the international peace conference on the Middle East, held under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation on an equal footing of all the parties involved, including the PLO and the permanent members of the Security Council.

(Mr. Yahya, Malaysia)

My delegation is also alarmed by reports of an increasing arms build-up in the region following the end of the Gulf war. Certainly such an unhealthy trend would eventually create heightened tension, bringing about increased suspicions which could be exploited by those who oppose the peace talks. Highly sophisticated arms have been flowing into the area from all directions; obviously, the present economic problems are boosting sales, as many previous bans by producers on sales of arms to the region have been lifted. We believe that there is an obvious need to prevent an accumulation of arms in the region beyond a reasonable level needed for self-defence.

The widespread belief that Israel possesses nuclear weapons has for many years given the countries of the region cause for serious fear and has contributed in large measure to the arms build-up. For this reason, Malaysia fully supports the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of all types of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. We strongly believe that through the establishment of such a zone the clouds of distrust and suspicion could be swept away, promoting confidence-building measures which are essential to bring the countries in the region together.

In this regard, we call upon all countries in the region, particularly Israel, to place all their nuclear activities and facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and international inspection. Throughout its history the Middle East region was the centre of civilization, and it is time for its restoration to that position. The rich resources available in the region should be wisely utilized to bring economic prosperity to the majority of the population, who have unjustly suffered due to the many conflicts that have occurred in the region.

Mr. HADID (Algeria) (interpretation from French): In once again considering the item concerning the situation in the Middle East, the Assembly is this time doing so in an international climate that gives reason to hope for the achievement of a peaceful, just and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict in the framework of international legality and on the basis of United Nations resolutions which, by virtue of their international character, strengthen the peace process that began a year ago in Madrid.

The radical changes in international relations demonstrate that a just political balance is the key to peace, that the will to exercise the right of self-determination is an irrepressible force and that foreign occupation is invariably doomed to failure.

In short, the principles and norms of international law and international legality cannot be disregarded, nor can they be adapted to allow the application of double standards, since respect for them is a guarantee of world peace.

The developments in the Middle East region inspire mixed feelings of hope and concern. There is hope, because after four decades of a turbulent history marked by several major conflicts and constant threats of an explosion affecting a wide area, that part of the world finally seems to be benefiting from commendable, sincere efforts towards a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict and its central issue, the question of Palestine. But there is also concern, because the hope inspired by these developments, especially the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference, is damped every day by the situation in the occupied Arab territories and by Israel's practices.

(Mr. Hadid, Algeria)

As the facts of the Middle East conflict are well known and have for a long time been well identified, the bases and goals of a lasting settlement to this conflict have been identified and reaffirmed repeatedly by the General Assembly. The history of this region teaches us that it is precisely because these obvious facts have been ignored that all earlier attempts at settlement have not succeeded.

Today it is up to us once again to emphasize these central elements.

First, a settlement is possible and conceivable if it leads to the withdrawal of Israel from all of the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds. This is a fact that can never be overemphasized. We must not grow accustomed to the fait accompli of Israel's occupation of Arab territories.

Secondly, the question of Palestine is indisputably at the heart of the Middle East conflict. Any settlement process can be so called only if it integrates into its approach and its objectives the full exercise by the Palestinian people of their national rights.

Thirdly, so long as Israel pursues its efforts to modify the demographic composition and to distort the Arab character of the occupied territories, that attitude will continue to be a major obstacle to peace. This policy, especially in Al-Quds, has taken on unparalleled proportions. In this regard, it is always useful to emphasize the considerable importance of this holy city for all Arabs and for all of the revealed religions, and to emphasize its sacred Arab character, which cannot be left indefinitely to the mercy and whims of any occupier.

A part of the territory of Lebanon remains under Israeli occupation. It is our duty to denounce and to vigorously condemn the continuation of that occupation. Security Council resolution 425 (1978) does not authorize any

(Mr. Hadid, Algeria)

interpretation other than that of the immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of Israel.

My country wishes here to reaffirm its dedication to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries. My country condemns the continuation of the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and its military and arbitrary practices against the civilian population.

United Nations involvement in the Middle East settlement process could bring with it the political support of the international community as a whole and thus generate a new impetus for the achievement of peace. In this context it becomes a duty, because of the more dynamic role that has been assigned to them, for the restoration of law and justice.

We hope that the will of the international community, as expressed in the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, will be imposed immediately and equitably, and that these resolutions will no longer remain a dead letter, as has been the case for so many years, lest the United Nations lose its credibility.

Mr. JAYA (Brunei Darussalam): It was widely expected that the end of the cold war would bring about a period of peace and stability in the world through dialogue and cooperation. However, we have yet to see this come about in the Middle East.

Just a few days ago we were discussing the question of Palestine, which constitutes the core problem of the Middle East conflict. We noted that a framework within which to address Middle East concerns had been established following the first peace conference held in Madrid last year. This was a

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

significant step towards building up mutual confidence and understanding among the participating parties.

In this regard, we should like once again to express our appreciation to the Governments of the United States and the Russian Federation for their efforts in co-sponsoring the peace talks on the Middle East and we would like to offer our continued encouragement.

We should also like to commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in the Middle East (A/46/672).

We have followed closely the current peace talks on the Middle East and have noted that little tangible progress has been achieved so far. Above all, we have noted signs of reluctance on the part of Israel to address the core of the Middle East problem. This, of course, is the question of Palestine. Israel's aggressive policies and its cccupation and annexation of Palestine and Arab territories still persist.

Furthermore, we see Israel's refusal to bring the PLO into the current peace talks as a serious barrier to an enduring peace settlement. Such a refusal indicates a lack of genuine interest and of serious intent on the part of Israel, for my delegation is of the opinion that a lasting solution must involve all the conflicting parties.

For this reason, we think the time is now appropriate to call for a widening of the scope of the peace process so as to allow for the participation of the PLO on an equal footing. The PLO is the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

As I stated earlier, Palestine is the core of the Middle East problem. Therefore, it would certainly be counter-productive to hope for anything substantive from peace talks which do not include the representatives of the

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

people who are most seriously affected. If the PLO is not a party to the talks, then there is little possibility of Palestine being the focus of negotiations, and any settlement is likely to lead to a fragile and limited peace.

In addressing these issues, my delegation would like to underline the importance of giving the Palestinians their fundamental human rights, particularly their inalienable right to a homeland. Once again, we would like to join the call of the international community urging Israel to abide by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It is incumbent upon the Israelis to withdraw from southern Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, the Golan Heights and Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The time is now opportune for this body to resume a higher profile in resolving the complex problems and in helping to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. To this end, my delegation continues to see merit in the proposal to convene an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations.

Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait) (interpretation from Arabic): The United Nations General Assembly debates today the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East" at a time that can definitely and objectively be called a turning point in the history of the region.

Based on past experience and future expectations as well as on a new world order whose foundations are being laid in the light of positive changes, the peoples of the Middle East look forward with hope to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to one of the region's political, economic and social problems, one that has cast its dark shadows on the peoples and States of the region for more than 45 years.

Our realistic position is based on the fact that the core and crux of the problem in the Middle East is the Palestinian question and that the link between this question and peace and stability in the region is an organic one which cannot be denied. Thus peace will always elude us so long as the Palestinian question remains unsolved. That is why we, together with the whole world, are very much interested in the peace negotiations that have been under way for a full year in Washington between the parties to the conflict, and we feel that any impediments to this process would deepen the despair and frustration of the peoples of the region. This, in turn, would lead to a deterioration of the situation and more instability in the region that might well pose a grave threat to peace and security in the world.

The Arab delegations participating in the peace process in Washington have shown a solid political will to achieve peace. Their approach throughout these negotiations has been characterized by flexibility, understanding and openness. However, those delegations are not ready to abandon the essential basis for the solution of the problem: total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories. The Arab delegations have proved

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

their belief that a lasting and just peace deserves every sacrifice from them as well as from Israel.

The current phase of the negotiations requires vision and wisdom as well as according a heightened priority to the interests of the States and peoples of the region and to the necessity of overcoming the numerous obstacles that have accumulated over the years. Our objective - the objective of all of us - is to achieve a durable and just peace in the Middle East. We believe that this will not be achieved without the following elements:

First, the principle of the non-admissibility of the acquisition of land by force.

Secondly, the principle that durable peace has a price, and that the price is land.

Thirdly, the necessity of implementing the resolutions of international legality, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Fourthly, the right of the Palestinian people, like other peoples of the world, to self-determination and to the establishment of their own independent State on their land.

Fifthly, the right of the refugees to return to their homes.

Sixthly, the principle of rejection of the settlement policy, which should not be considered a bargaining chip - thus all the consequences of this policy should be null and void.

Seventhly, the principle of respecting the demographic features of the occupied Arab territories; these features should never be changed; and any changes should be null and void.

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

On the basis of these principles, we call on Israel to completely withdraw from the territories it has continued to occupy since 1967, namely Gaza; the West Bank, including Al-Quds; the Syrian Arab Golan Heights; and southern Lebanon.

Also, Israel must halt its settlements in the Golan Heights and stop its repeated military attacks against southern Lebanon under flimsy pretexts. Israel should also respect the sovereignty of Lebanon over all its soil and should not interfere in the internal affairs of Lebanon. We wholeheartedly welcome the return of stability to Lebanon, and we wish for this creative people and for their Government to continue their development and to overcome the results of the years of turmoil. We are sure that the political will and the national resolve of the brotherly Lebanese people will enable them to do so. Kuwait supports the Lebanese people and their Government.

Kuwait believes that the current peace process in the Middle East deserves deep support, so that it may create a stable foundation for a just peace and security. That is why we have participated effectively in multilateral meetings in the context of the peace process aimed at solving the problem of the Middle East. Kuwait has participated in the meetings on security, disarmament, economic development, refugees, the environment and water. In so doing, we join the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and other Arab countries in the common endeavour to move the peace process forward so that it may achieve its noble objectives.

Peace is an indivisible whole. Peace is the outcome of good intentions, sound objectives and proper actions. At a time when we find the Palestinian people demonstrating their desire to achieve this sort of peace and find the Arab countries concerned showing the same desire, we call on Israel to adopt

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

the same approach, to withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories and to give the Palestinian people the chance to exercise their fundamental right to self-determination, to establish their State and to restore their capital, Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It is high time the whole world made peace the sole option in the region, peace on the basis of right, justice, United Nations resolutions and international legality.

Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia) (interpretation from Arabic): Allow me, once again, to extend to you, Mr. President, on behalf of my delegation, our appreciation for the competence you have shown in guiding the work of this forty-seventh session, together with our wishes for continued success.

Today the General Assembly considers the situation in the Middle East, which, as we see it and the international community sees it, is a crucial one, given the tragedies we have been seeing in that region for so long. The Security Council and other international bodies have adopted numerous resolutions in this regard without, unfortunately, bringing about any real improvement in the situation that might eliminate the historic injustices in southern Lebanon, in the Golan Heights and in the occupied Palestinian lands which have subjected entire generations to suffering and which even now continue.

Today, when the international community is undergoing a restructuring of international relations as part of the new world order to which we aspire, we are entitled to wonder how long the situation in this region will persist when there are many conflicts and crises that are on the verge of being solved, and when the United Nations and its bodies have taken radical positions by adopting resolutions and by trying to find peaceful and effective solutions in order to stop bloodshed and preserve peace and security world wide.

The resolutions adopted by this Organization which fill its archives should lead us, as we enter upon a new stage in international relations in the last decade of the century, to ask certain questions and draw certain conclusions with regard to the successive failures and shortcomings, and wonder whether we have really carried out our task in respect of this region and its peoples.

(Mr. Khouini, Tunisia)

Bearing in mind the reports submitted to the General Assembly and the information in document A/47/509, entitled "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories", we should take a close look at the events in the occupied Arab territories and at the practices that have continued to be pursued in these territories since 1967.

In spite of the fact that many statements, declarations and appeals have been made, especially from this rostrum, and in spite of the fact that the peace talks are continuing and have been continuing since the Madrid Conference, we have not seen, in the field, any serious move by Israel that might be construed as movement towards peace. Collective punishments continue, as do expulsions and the deportation of citizens. Settlements continue to be built on land abandoned by its legitimate owners, and the suffering of Arab peoples under occupation is not being alleviated.

In addition to this, there is the economic blockade, imprisonment by administrative decrees, detention, persecution and torture going on under the nose of the international community in spite of international resolutions and the norms of humanitarian law which, as Members of this international Organization we should always refer to and strictly apply, because they embody what we call international legality, which is the only valid framework for applying the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Our feelings of disappointment and frustration prove that the Arab peoples of these regions are devoted to the United Nations Charter and the credibility of this Organization.

(Mr. Khouini, Tunisia)

The strengthening of the United Nations and its resolutions in other spheres, especially regarding conflicts which are about to be resolved or which have been resolved, maintain the hope of these peoples and their belief that the United Nations will be able to help them in future. The statements made from this rostrum, in which delegations from all over the world declaring that we cannot achieve international peace unless we deal effectively with existing problems and conflicts, will have been for naught if they are not translated into deeds.

In the final analysis, we must restore the rights of peoples and establish peace and understanding. The Agenda for Peace (A/47/277) drawn up by the Secretary-General, which we have discussed in terms of its objective framework and the ways and means to implement it, bespeaks the desire to put an end to aggression in any shape or form and to restore peace in all parts of the world, including the Middle East region whose problem we are considering today with all its attendant tragedies and its disturbing circumstances.

While the Arab side has shown its genuine desire to work for real peace in the Middle East on the basis of the principle of land for peace, Israel continues to prevaricate, which leads us to believe that Israel wishes to destroy any chance of peace and has not yet realized that peace cannot go hand in hand with occupation because peace and security, if they are to be lasting and comprehensive, cannot be based on the usurpation of land by force nor by oppression and aggression.

Peace and security should be based, rather, on the security of international agreements and legality, and respect for the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State on its own national soil.

(Mr. Khouini, Tunisia)

Peace is a civilized concept that encompasses, for us Arabs, peace, security, understanding and the rejection of aggression. It is not compatible with the denial of the rights of others. Peace is based on legality and respect for the rights of others. It is an indivisible whole. Any negation of either of its expressions would cancel it out.

This has been my country's approach in dealing with the question of the Middle East since 1947. It was on this basis that we took part in the Peace Conference in Madrid as an observer alongside the Palestinian and other Arab delegations in the conviction that we could not let any opportunity for peace pass by and in the hope that we would reach our objectives.

(Mr. Khouini, Tunisia)

The Arab delegations, thanks to their flexibility, since the beginning of the Madrid Conference, have demonstrated that peace is their real objective. They have shown the entire world that the Palestinian issue, the crux of the Middle East conflict, is a just cause which cannot be blotted out by any ploy whatsoever. We have shown that this is the cause of a people that wishes to live in peace on its own land and exercise all the rights that have been its rights since the dawn of history. The building of settlements and new towns cannot obliterate a people that has proved, through its intifadah and its participation in the peace process, that it remains determined to exercise its legitimate rights. Those rights cannot be taken away from it by force or by any war machine.

The Israeli side must realize this fact and must renounce once and for all every practice that may compromise this chance for peace, because any relapse will hurl our region into the unknown and thereby endanger the peace and security of the world.

My peace-loving country has constantly supported the United Nations in every endeavour that aimed at upholding the principles of the Charter. We have supported every just cause and sent our sons to ensure that peace prevails throughout the world, from Cambodia to Namibia to the former Yugoslavia, because we understand full well, as witnessed by our unfailing support for the Palestinian people, that the international community is duty bound to intervene and to act in the Middle East, as in other regions of the world, so that it may benefit from the peace and security guaranteed to the rest of the world. As proof of this, I quote from the statement of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who declared on 7 November:

(Mr. Khouini, Tunisia)

"Convinced as we are of the justice of the Palestinian cause and the need to find a peaceful solution to the Palestinian issue, we constantly support this cause in all international bodies and we support international efforts aimed at a just, global and lasting settlement of the Middle East crisis on the basis of the recovering of occupied Arab territories for peace."

Faithful to our full and continued support for the Palestinian options and the solutions which the Palestinians themselves favour, we have facilitated dialogue between Palestinians and the United States of America. We have encouraged the peace process through our participation in the Madrid Conference and in the multilateral talks. We are prepared to take any initiative which might serve the just cause of the Palestinians and bring about peace and stability. We are determined to continue to support the peace process until such time as the various negotiations in which the Palestinians have such great hopes are crowned by success.

Complete withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied since 1967, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon are the only prerequisite for establishing a just, lasting and global peace which would guarantee peaceful coexistence for all parties in the Middle East, including Israel and all the other Arab peoples.

The United Nations, which is a party to the current peace process, bears a major responsibility for promoting the peace process. The United Nations continues to play this important role on the basis of resolutions and principles of the Charter. The Secretary-General has appointed a Special Representative to take part in the multilateral talks and we welcome that

(Mr. Khouini, Tunisia)

initiative for it indicates that it is now certain that the Organization will be a full-fledged party in the peace talks and that this will give the peace process the momentum it deserves.

The olive branch offered from this rostrum by President Arafat is still there. The international community should ensure that the olive branch remains aloft and that the hopes that the Palestinian people attach to the United Nations do not evaporate. This is a grave responsibility. We must shoulder it and thereby pave the way to peace and stability in the Middle East. By so doing, we shall have contributed effectively to the maintenance of the peace and security of the world.

Mr. MURTAZA (Pakistan): The present debate in the General Assembly on the situation in the Middle East is taking place at a very critical moment in the region's history. The year 1992 also coincides with the twenty-fifth year of Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands. In spite of many efforts during the last quarter of a century a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict has yet to be found. Arab and Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, remain under occupation and the people of Palestine have still to exercise their right to self-determination. The Middle East remains an area characterized by violence and heightened tensions.*

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* Mr. Moumin (Comoros), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Murtaza, Pakistan)

Peace in the Middle East needs both a vision and a sincere commitment. The broad framework for a settlement already exists. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) provide the basis for a comprehensive settlement in the region. The principle of land for peace, which has been widely endorsed by the international community, can be the underpinning of a solution to this problem.

Durable peace in the Middle East entails the full withdrawal of Israel from all Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and to establish a State of its own. In our view, the issue of Palestine lies at the core of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict. The Middle East will not find lasting peace unless the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people are adequately addressed.

The convening at Madrid of the Peace Conference on the Middle East last year gave rise to considerable expectations and hope. The beginning of that process was widely welcomed by the international community. However, in spite of a lapse of one year, the talks have yet to make substantive progress. This points clearly to the need to intensify international efforts further in order to provide the necessary impetus to the process. The alternative is to run the risk of further deepening the already widespread sense of frustration and despair existing in the occupied territories. The international community must reinvigorate its efforts to overcome the obstacles to a comprehensive settlement.

(Mr. Murtaza, Pakistan)

A major impediment in the way of the current peace process is the Israeli policy of settlements in the Arab and Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Changes in the demographic composition of the occupied territories as a result of that policy are contrary to international law. Such measures only serve to undermine international efforts aimed at a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict. Renunciation of the settlements policy by Israel would help generate the confidence and trust between the parties necessary to arrive at a solution of the problem.

The occupation of southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights should be brought to an immediate end. The people of Palestine should be permitted to exercise their inalienable right of self-determination. The situation calls for a demonstration of the highest statesmanship and a sense of responsibility, particularly on the part of Israel, on whose sincerity the success of the peace process will depend. An imposed peace can be neither durable nor just.

It must be recognized that the United Nations, as the collective conscience of mankind, has made a significant contribution to the promotion of a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has been seized of the issue since its very inception. Its potential to contribute to the present peace process should also be fully exploited. We are gratified to note the invitation to the Organization to participate in a substantive manner in the multilateral negotiations. It is important for the United Nations to be associated, especially since it may be called upon to assist the countries of the region in the long term.

(Mr. Murtaza, Pakistan)

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that it is our sincere hope that the Middle East peace talks will result in a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the return of all occupied Arab territories and the restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. The present opportunity must be seized. Failure to do this would have grave consequences not only for the peoples of that region but also for international peace and security. As members of the family of nations, we have the right to expect that the call by the international community for peace will be heeded. For its part, Pakistan will continue fully to support international efforts aimed at resolving the conflict.

Mrs. SYAHRUDDIN (Indonesia): The General Assembly is considering the situation in the Middle East against the backdrop of many encouraging developments. The past year will go down in the annals of history as the year in which significant initiatives were taken towards a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a conflict which has preoccupied the international community for over four decades.

The meetings held at Madrid in October 1991 were the first-ever negotiations between the parties directly concerned. They were soon followed by a series of meetings in Moscow, Rome, The Hague and Washington. The convening of the Peace Conference flowed from the historic decision of the parties to negotiate with the aim of reaching a durable peace through two parallel tracks of direct negotiations, one between the Arabs and Israel and the other between Israel and the Palestinians. The resulting bilateral and multilateral talks constitute important steps forward in the continuing search for a political solution.

(Mrs. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

Our heightened sense of optimism has been further bolstered by the new Israeli Government's pronouncement with respect to advancing the peace process at an accelerated pace and to regarding the ongoing negotiations to achieve peace and security as a goal of the highest priority. Furthermore, the agreement reached between Israel and Jordan on an agenda and guidelines for further talks, as well as their expressed goal of a peace treaty between them within the framework of an Arab-Israeli settlement, augurs well for negotiations on substantive issues. My delegation is particularly gratified to note that the United Nations is no longer marginalized and that the Organization will attend, as a full extra-regional participant, the ongoing multilateral negotiations on the Middle East.

In sharp contrast to the optimism created by those positive developments, there is a deepening sense of frustration, as the talks have yet to yield concrete results. On the critical question of Palestinian self-governing authority during the transition period, the talks have failed to yield any progress. Israel's refusal to implement Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which envisions land for peace, and its intention to seek to legitimize its continued control of the occupied territories have contributed to a virtual stalemate.

(Mrs. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

Israel has also proclaimed its intention to retain responsibility for security in those territories and to maintain control over foreign affairs. But the Palestinians cannot be expected to acquiesce in anything less than the attainment of their cherished objective of an independent State. Furthermore, the issues of the status of Jerusalem and of the participation of Palestinian representatives from the Holy City have been excluded from the negotiations currently underway. Similarly, substantive differences exist between Israel and Syria concerning the former's withdrawal from the Golan Heights as well as between Israel and Lebanon with regard to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the self-proclaimed security zone.

Meanwhile, the situation in the occupied territories remains critical, since there has been no palpable change in the policies and practices of the occupying Power. Indeed, Israel has continued to apply harsh measures against the civilian population, in utter disregard of the ongoing peace process. It is truly regrettable that the peace negotiations have not been accompanied by measures to achieve significant improvement in the daily life of the long-suffering Palestinian people.

The leaders of non-aligned countries at their Tenth Summit Conference last September at Jakarta emphasized that any approach to a solution of the Palestine question and the Arab-Israeli conflict should be comprehensive in nature, that the eventual settlement cannot address some of the causes of the conflict to the exclusion of others, and that peace cannot prevail in the region if it does not include the Palestinians, whose cause is at the core of the conflict. The non-aligned countries therefore stressed the firm view that the Peace Conference should seek a speedy implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), long recognized as the cornerstones of any comprehensive settlement.

(Mrs. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

My delegation has noted with immense satisfaction the positive developments that have taken place in Lebanon, especially the sustained progress achieved in national reconciliation, and the efforts made by the Lebanese Government to ensure the full exercise of its authority over all of its territory. Yet Lebanon, which was invaded by Israel 10 years ago, with horrendous consequences, continues to be an integral part of Israel's designs to establish a permanent military presence in southern Lebanon, as it is attempting to do in the occupied territories. Indonesia has in the past condemned Israel's illegal occupation through the illegitimate local forces it has set up as surrogates under its control, and has supported the struggle of the Lebanese people to liberate their country. Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity must be restored and the authority of its Government enforced throughout the country.

In the context of the fundamental and profound changes in the international landscape, especially the renewed determination peacefully to resolve various regional conflicts, it is of paramount importance to intensify efforts for a settlement in the Middle East. The peace process has now reached an important and critical stage. A solution is urgently needed, one based on international law, the principles of the Charter and the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions. We therefore call upon Israel to be flexible and to redirect the negotiations with a view to achieving permanent peace in the region. We shall then have the most promising opportunity for security and stability in the Middle East.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to congratulate Ambassador Gharekhan of India upon his well-deserved appointment as the Secretary General's Special Representative to the Middle East peace talks. We wish him success in his endeavours.

Mr. HAJNOCZI (Austria): During the past year we have witnessed tremendous changes in international politics, changes which give cause for serious concern. Where the region of the Middle East is concerned there was, however, a positive development that may have far-reaching consequences for the goal towards which we have all been striving for such a long time. In the aftermath of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict the international community again focused on the still-unsolved questions of the Middle East. Thanks to unrelenting efforts, especially by former United States Secretary of State James Baker, this led to the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991, where for the first time after more than 40 years all parties to the conflict were sitting at the negotiating table.

Austria, in keeping with its long-standing commitment to and friendly relations with the Arab world, has, from the very beginning, fully supported the regional peace process for the Middle East. We believe that there is, as defined for the Madrid meeting, a basis for a workable solution, which consists first and foremost in the acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the commonly accepted principle of land for peace, the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the right of all States in the region to exist within safe and secure boundaries.

After one year of the peace process, which has proceeded on both the bilateral and multilateral tracks, we do not yet know its outcome. Austria pointed out at the very beginning that the process would be long and arduous and that we should not expect quick results. We have to continue the dialogue that has been initiated, which is at this moment the only viable alternative to further suffering, violence and bloodshed.

Today we can see some positive signs in the bilateral negotiations. We firmly believe that an interim self-government arrangement between the

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Austria)

Palestinians and Israel will be possible. I should like to commend in this context the constructive role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the wake of the Madrid Conference and up to today. We understand the problems and constraints of the Palestinian leadership in the current negotiations and we highly appreciate the realistic course of action and the constructive and pragmatic attitude adopted by it and by the various Palestinian delegations in the talks. This goes back to the Palestinian National Council meeting in September 1991 in Algiers, where a considerable amount of flexibility dominated and influenced its decisions.

We have also been witnessing positive changes in the attitude of Israel with regard to the settlement policy and the practices in the occupied territories. However, a lot more remains to be done. We would encourage the present Israeli Government's explicit acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the widely shared principle of land for peace, and its responsibilities towards the occupied territories stemming from international law and international human-rights instruments.

With regard to the bilateral talks, Austria can only encourage all parties to the conflict to continue the dialogue, to discuss the substance of the issues and to refrain in so far as possible from political posturing. At the same time, we appeal to all sides to refrain from the use of force and repression so as not to lose the momentum gained. The unique opportunity of direct talks between all parties has to be preserved.

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Austria)

Austria has become a fully fledged member of the multilateral peace negotiations. My country has not only participated in and contributed to all meetings since the inauguration of the multilateral peace process in Moscow last January, but also hosted the first session of the working group on water resources last May. We believe that the multilateral peace process gives us a unique chance to proceed in different areas that have direct impact on the population in the region. Concrete projects in the economic field, in water sharing, in traffic and communication, in the environment and, of course, with regard to the refugee issue and regional disarmament are to the immediate benefit of human beings and most directly of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and elsewhere. We have, therefore, appealed several times to all participants to take an active part in the multilateral negotiating process in order to achieve concrete, quick results. In this regard, I wish to reiterate the Austrian appeal to Syria and Lebanon to join the multilateral talks as soon as possible. Their participation would also benefit the bilateral process, because the two tracks are interrelated and mutually stimulating and invigorating.

The Palestinian delegations in the various multilateral working groups have stressed again and again that regional cooperation on an equal footing, whatever the subject, is impossible as long as legitimate rights have not been restored and the occupying Power still has severe restrictions in place for the Palestinian people. While we understand and sympathize with this position of principle and share the sense of frustration and impatience, we strongly believe that everything should be done to alleviate the plight of the displaced people now and prepare them in every way possible for the day of self-rule. This is what the multilateral track of the peace process should

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Austria)

be all about. Whatever extraregional participants, like my country, can do to contribute towards this end should be done.

When we say "peace", we also say "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people". Only a peaceful togetherness of all the peoples of the Middle East region will guarantee further development of the manifold heritage of culture and civilization in the Middle East. This should become, with the help of all of us, a reality for the benefit of the countries and peoples directly concerned.

Mr. BUTLER (Australia): We are witnessing profound changes in the international arena. The ending of the cold war and the transition from super-Power rivalry to new degrees of cooperation have fundamentally altered the world in which we live.

In the Middle East, the new environment of international rapprochement has encouraged Israel and its Arab neighbours to take a fresh look at the issues that divide them. Unfortunately, as the tragic situation in the Balkans demonstrates, longstanding enmities and differences are difficult to overcome. The situation in the Middle East, with its complex historical and political roots, has been one of the most enduring conflicts on the international agenda.

It is therefore particularly encouraging that the parties have been willing to sit down together and discuss their differences. Australia pays tribute to the co-sponsors of the peace process begun in Madrid more than a year ago and to their foresight in initiating a process of dialogue between the parties and establishing a framework for their negotiations. There can be no alternative to direct negotiations between the parties in the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

Australia is not a major player in Middle Eastern affairs, but, like other responsible countries, we are concerned at the implications of conflict in the region for global security.

Australia's policy towards the Middle East is based on two main premises: first, a total commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries; and, secondly, a recognition of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent State.

For many years now Australia has supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East dispute based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 war and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty of every State in the region and the right of each State to live in peace within secure boundaries. It is our hope that the Madrid peace process will lead to such a comprehensive settlement.

In the period since the inaugural conference in Madrid we have seen progress in all bilateral tracks, and we have seen the potential contribution of the multilateral phase towards the development of regional cooperation in a range of fields. We are pleased that the eighth round of bilateral talks between the parties is scheduled to resume in Washington this week.

We believe that it is now time for all the parties to think of, and implement, further confidence-building measures that could help give momentum to the peace process. On the Arab side, suspension of the economic boycott against Israel would represent a practical step towards reducing mutual suspicions and animosities. Israel could also further demonstrate its commitment to the peace process by adopting practices that would immediately

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

improve the human rights situation and living conditions in the occupied territories.

Australia calls on all sides to urge and exercise restraint to prevent a repetition of the violence that occurred in southern Lebanon and northern Israel during November. The violence we have seen in recent months in southern Lebanon, Israel and the occupied territories has the potential to disrupt the negotiations, thereby playing into the hands of those groups that oppose the talks.

We are pleased that the last round of talks between Israel and Lebanon continued without interruption, despite the violence that erupted on their border. We urge all parties to the dispute to show restraint and refrain from violence that detracts from the issues under discussion at the negotiating table.

We hope that all parties will see the benefit of participating in the multilateral phase of the talks and ensure that progress in this phase complements and reinforces progress in the bilateral track. The peace process offers the parties a chance to develop ground rules that could not only ensure peace in the region in the future, but lead to greater prosperity through regional cooperation. The multilateral talks have the potential to lead to regional cooperation on such vital issues as water resources, economic development, arms control and regional security, the environment and refugees.

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

In line with Australia's support for the multilateral phase of the negotiations, we recently participated in the working group on arms control and regional security. Drawing on our experience in promoting regional arms control and disarmament strategies, we encouraged Arab and Israeli delegates to move towards the establishment of a regional dialogue on arms control and security issues, and to focus their attention on achievable confidence-building measures, leading to possible arms control arrangements in the future.

Australia looks forward to its further association with the working group. We are committed to pursuing a supportive and constructive role with the objective of promoting genuine arms control arrangements in the region in the context of the peace negotiations.

Australia fully supports the Taif Agreement, and welcomes the continuing progress towards Lebanon's national reconciliation, consistent with its provisions. We call on all parties to respect and to implement the Agreement. Australia opposes any activity in Lebanon by outside forces which compromises Lebanese sovereignty. We hope that in the future the situation will permit the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon.

Australia continues to support fully the action taken by the Security Council on Iraq, including the continuing task of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and investigating the Iraqi weapons' programmes. Australia is concerned about Iraq's failure to implement fully and unconditionally its Security Council obligations and calls on Iraq to do so without delay.

We are particularly concerned about the situation of civilian groups in Iraq and call upon the Iraqi Government to ensure that all of its citizens

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

enjoy equal human and political rights in line with Security Council resolution 688 (1991).

We were pleased to see the recent renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding governing the United Nations humanitarian programme in Iraq. We hope that the delays experienced in signing it can be avoided in the future. Responsibility for the welfare of tne Iraqi people rests ultimately with the Iraqi Government. Australia again urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate with the Security Council in implementing those resolutions which would allow it to resume oil exports so that the hardships that are evident among the civilian population can be addressed.

Australia also supports the Security Council's action on Libya and we hope that Libya will quickly find a way to comply fully with Security Council resolutions 731 (1992) and 748 (1992).

In conclusion, I would like to encourage all parties to the current Middle East peace process to continue their negotiations and to seek agreements which will enable all States in the region to live in mutual peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries. If we do not have further progress, there is a serious risk that various constituencies represented by the delegations may withdraw their support for the peace process. The Middle East negotiations should not be seen as a zero sum game, where one party's gain is the other's loss. Rather, a comprehensive settlement should make possible an outcome where all parties are better off at the end of the process than they were at the outset.

Australia also calls on all States to lend their full support to the current efforts towards achieving a just and lasting peace in the region. The benefits of such a settlement would be far-reaching not only for peace,

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

stability and, ultimately, prosperity for the region but also as a significant contribution to international peace and security.

Mr. MOTHIBAMELE (Botswana): Last year when we debated this item, the Madrid Conference, which had brought the peoples of the Middle East together for the first time in 40 years, had just ended. The Conference had heightened our hopes that the resolution of the Middle East problem was at last in sight and that peace was within reach. We had pinned our hopes on the Conference because the erstwhile adversaries had met in order to negotiate "a just, lasting and comprehensive peace through direct negotiations".

We were convinced and remain convinced that the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict can best be settled by the peoples of the Middle East themselves in a spirit of give and take. The peoples of the Middle East are tired of hearing the discordant sounds of fire-power in a bloody conflict which often results in the killings of innocent civilians, women and children included.

Mankind welcomes the advent of the new world order, a world where our children can go to bed without fear of nuclear threat, a world very safe to live in, a world where there are neither ideological conflicts nor competitions for spheres of influence - indeed a world in which all, irrespective of colour, sex, creed or religion can live together as brothers and sisters. These apparent assurances of safety, peace and security in the world do not mean anything to those who are at the core of the conflict in the Middle East. To them the fruits of this new world order are still to come. To them the old world order still prevails undiminished, uncompromising and still determined to persist as though the times had not changed.

(Mr. Mothibamele, Botswana)

My delegation listened with great interest to the statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel delivered during the general debate. He spoke of

> "an Israel that has chosen to step out of the shadows of the past to prepare for the invitation of a new future." (A/47/PV.20, p. 44)

He said:

> "the forces of change have pushed aside the pillars of conventional wisdom, which proclaimed that military power is the source of natural strength and prestige." (ibid., p. 45)

He maintained that

> "This is no longer true." (ibid.)

I have decided to remind the Assembly of what Minister Shimon Perez said because the world is now waiting to see whether his words match his actions. "A new broom sweeps clean" is an old adage.

(Mr. Mothibamele, Botswana)

My delegation would like to see the new Government of Israel move from words to actions. We have listened to words for a long time. My delegation would be delighted should the Israeli Government move from stalemate to action, and would further be heartened if the other actors in the Middle East could join hands and move towards the resolution of the problem. Posterity will judge the actors in this exercise by this move.

Again, when the Assembly debated agenda item 10, the representative of Israel alluded to the principles enshrined in the Charter, which speak eloquently of the determination

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations ... to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security ... and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples ...".

He also posed a Greek orator's question: "What greater crime can an orator be charged with than that his opinions and his language are not the same?"

I decided to remind the Assembly of what the Israelis themselves have said, because even as we debate here today the words do not seem to match the actions.

The reports before the Assembly detail a number of disturbing incidents and appalling conditions to which the Palestinians are subjected by the Israeli occupation forces. These are matters of grave concern, and only serve to undermine or poison the atmosphere of tolerance in the negotiations. There is an urgent need for restraint on the part of the Israeli forces. The

(Mr. Mothibamele, Botswana)

Israeli Government would do well to take measures to stem and reverse the ugly situation and thus create conditions conducive to negotiations.

Botswana, as a freedom-loving, peace-loving and justice-loving nation, is disheartened by the reports and calls on Israel to be committed to change in the shortest possible time. Time is of the essence. It must be remembered that what is at issue in this conflict is the struggle for a birthright between two peoples whose claims to an independent homeland in Palestine enjoy equal legitimacy. The people of Israel are entitled to be where they are in the pre-1967 State of Israel - a right that Botswana has long recognized, a right that is not negotiable. We have said more than once that the reality of the State of Israel is not transitory but permanent. In equal measure, the people of Palestine are entitled to a homeland of their own in the West Bank and Gaza - an entitlement which is not negotiable either, any more than is Israel's right to exist within its pre-1967 frontiers. It is in this context that our unyielding support for the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence in a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza must be understood.

As we make this earnest plea for the parties to the Middle East conflict to walk towards each other, we also call for mutual restraint. Both parties must know that the status quo in the region is untenable. Invasion of one another's territory will only serve to delay the peace talks. The Secretary-General has said:

> "It is incumbent on every participant in this process to muster the goodwill, flexibility and determination necessary to sustain the negotiations until they achieve their goal. The peoples of the Middle East - a region which has been subjected to five major wars, and where

(Mr. Mothibamele, Botswana)

tension and bloodshed continue to cast a shadow over the fragile process that has been established - deserve no less." (A/47/672, para. 29)

I entirely associate my delegation with this notion. Many Arab, Palestinian and Israeli lives have already been lost. No one is interested in seeing more lives lost in these senseless killings. In this respect, my delegation is delighted that the momentum has never been lost since the Madrid Conference. My delegation, therefore, whilst commending the United States for maintaining the momentum in this peacemaking process, would encourage all in the region to participate in the negotiations in a spirit of give and take.

The existence of a culture of tolerance is essential. Preconceived positions do not help the situation. I have said that in a situation such as this a spirit of give and take must be displayed. All the peoples of the Middle East must be involved in this process. My delegation therefore hopes that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) will be allowed to participate in the negotiations so that it may give a helping hand to the peacemaking process in the region. In the view of my delegation, this is a sure recipe for everlasting peace in the turbulence of the Middle East. My delegation hopes and prays that freedom, peace and security will reign in this region, as elsewhere in the world.

Mr. McKINNON (New Zealand): At this time last year we reflected with optimism on developments in the Middle East. The United Nations had demonstrated its capacity to bring about the liberation of one of its smaller Member States from aggression and occupation by a larger neighbour. And the parties to the central problem of the region were at last beginning the process of dialogue on the peaceful settlement of their dispute.

(Mr. McKinnon, New Zealand)

More progress has been made, but with difficulty and continuing uncertainty. The Organization's efforts to bring humanitarian assistance to the Kurdish and Shi'ite populations of Iraq, and, supported directly by New Zealand, to dispose of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, have met with appreciable success. But they have also met a seeming reluctance on the part of the Iraqi leadership to take seriously the commitment of the Security Council and the meaning of its resolutions. We urge, and we hope for, Iraq's full compliance with these resolutions. We must also express our concern for the well-being of Kuwaiti citizens who remain outside their country's borders and out of contact with their families. The restoration of such contact is a basic humanitarian necessity.

New Zealand remains concerned at the continuing flow of arms to the Middle East. That substantial progress has been made over the last year with the removal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is cause for satisfaction. But we should not become complacent because of the progress made in this particular regard. Lasting peace and stability in the region will require broader arms control and reduction efforts. This will call for further progress at both regional and global levels.

(Mr. McKinnon, New Zealand)

Unfortunately, it would seem that there is still a long way to go before a sufficiently improved climate can be created to translate such goals as a Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction into a reality. However, efforts to build confidence among the States of the region will play an essential role in creating the conditions for substantive arms control and disarmament measures and in ensuring a lasting peace. For this reason, we strongly support the ongoing dialogue within the Working Group on Arms Control established under the auspices of the recent negotiations.

New Zealand shares with other members of the Organization a deep concern for the maintenance of international peace and security and the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. Nowhere have those primary objectives of the Organization been so enduringly tested as in the Middle East. New Zealand has always had a profound sympathy and concern for human welfare in the Middle East. We have therefore been acutely aware of the suffering that conflicts have brought to the region's peoples, and we have supported such measures as the United Nations Charter permits to protect and ameliorate their situation.

We have long held that a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute requires the commitment of all parties to negotiation. The round of negotiations that began in Madrid last year, brokered by the United States with the support of the Russian Federation, gave new hope for the resolution of this complex and seemingly intractable issue. It has been the best opportunity ever for progress to be made. New Zea_and welcomed it and continues to give it full support.

The Madrid round of talks has yet to achieve specific results, but it has proceeded in a greatly improved atmosphere. That atmosphere has been damaged

(Mr. McKinnon, New Zealand)

by recent developments in southern Lebanon. These developments should not be allowed to interfere with the parties' commitment to a resolution.

New Zealand looks to these talks to provide the victims of failure, that is, the Palestinian people, relief at last from harsh military occupation and the abrogation of their legitimate rights. Their participation in the talks can only work to their benefit.

Successive New Zealand Governments have supported a comprehensive settlement on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). These resolutions place clear responsibilities on all the parties. They recognize that all States in the region have the right to exist in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force. Israel clearly has that right. But these resolutions also point to the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied in 1967. We regret that Israel has only partly complied with this call. We support the land-for-peace formula. We believe it can work.

New Zealand continues to hold that any solution must recognize the rights of both sides. If Israel's right to exist in certainty of its security and territorial integrity is clear, so too and equally do the Palestinians have the right to self-determination, including the right to establish their own State if that is their wish. The Madrid round of talks has provided a framework for the realization of their aspirations. That they have accepted that this will be an incremental process reflects an admirable willingness to compromise. Without such willingness on both sides, the process will stall, and suffering rather than peace will prevail.

We have been encouraged by indications that Israel is at least prepared

(Mr. McKinnon, New Zealand)

to modify its policy on new settlements in the occupied territories. A more useful gesture of compromise, however, would be the outright cessation of new settlements in those areas. We continue to believe the practice is a fundamental obstacle to the peace process. By the same token, we would support the call for the Arab States to reciprocate by lifting the trade boycott of Israel. We would also urge Israel to comply with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls on Israel to withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territory. The present situation in southern Lebanon and its effect on the peace negotiations highlight the urgent need for a conciliatory spirit.

The Organization has a duty to promote peace in all regions. The situation in the Middle East calls for tact and encouragement, as the long-sought goal of peace is almost within grasp. It would be a tragedy to allow past bitterness and recrimination to derail the peace process and condemn so many innocent people on both sides of the dispute to continuing uncertainty and warfare. The parties to the dispute have the capacity to resolve their differences. They must demonstrate their will. We must support them in their just efforts. There is hope, and the ultimate difficult step is the reality of a secure and lasting peace.

Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal): The Middle East was at the very heart of the first post-cold-war international consensus to uphold the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. Ironically, the Middle East continues to be the region where failure to achieve peace has the potential to undermine the shaping of a post-cold-war international order.

During the debate on this item last year, Member States welcomed the launching in Madrid of the historic Peace Conference on the Middle East. The key to this important initiative lay in the painstaking consultations

(Mr. Acharya, Nepal)

undertaken by its sponsors. Like other Members of the United Nations, Nepal too had expected a quicker pace. However, we are happy that one year after Madrid negotiations, the momentum generated has been maintained. Both bilateral and multilateral talks are continuing, and the parties are engaged in substantive dialogue.

The regional aspects of the peace process include crucial matters related to security, water, the environment, economic development and refugees. We support the call to make the Middle East a region free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Accession by all States of the region to the existing international instruments will be a major step in this direction.

(Mr. Acharya, Nepal)

The United Nations, because of its historical association with the situation, has an important role to play in the Middle East. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) form the basis of the ongoing negotiating process. It is important that the longstanding and manifold United Nations presence in the region be recognized and maintained. The three peace-keeping operations in the area, by maintaining local stability within their mandate, help give peace a chance. Several United Nations agencies including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, are engaged in valuable work of a humanitarian nature.

My Government is therefore satisfied that United Nations has been invited to attend the multilateral working-groups on regional issues as a full participant. I take this opportunity to express our happiness at the appointment of Ambassador Chinmaya Gharekhan of India, a diplomat of consummate skill, accomplishments and experience, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the multilateral talks.

Nepal has long held that any solution to the problem of the Middle East must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Likewise, we continue to hold that a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict must include three elements: withdrawal of Israel from territory occupied since 1967; recognition of the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to live in peace; and, solution of the problem of Palestine on the basis of recognition of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Acharya, Nepal)

Nepal welcomes the intention of the present Government of Israel to do all it can for the sake of peace. We look for the tangible translation of this Israeli objective in scrupulous observance of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. We appeal to the Israeli Government to take urgent measures to ensure respect for human rights and improved social and economic conditions for the people in the occupied territories. We deplore all violence in the occupied territories. We appeal to all parties concerned to desist from words and actions that might jeopardize the peace process. We appeal to them to show flexibility and far-sightedness. They all have a common stake in the success of the peace process. Given the past history and the present uncertainties, so does the international community.

Nepal supports the efforts of the Lebanese Government to re-establish its legitimate authority in the whole country. Our continued participation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon reflects our commitment in that regard.

No outsider can make peace in the Middle East. Winning peace in the Middle East is up to the parties concerned. After more than four decades, peace in the Middle East now has a chance. The parties concerned owe it to themselves and to the world to keep this promise.

Mr. BREITENSTEIN (Finland): The disappearance from global affairs of the East-West division has removed the threat of a global nuclear confrontation over the Middle East. That is a very good development. At the same time, regrettably, there is no real peace in the region. The Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts continue to smoulder. Violence and repression are all too evident.

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

It has become clear that peace in the Middle East in the post-cold-war era is fundamentally up to the parties themselves. No outsider, however powerful and determined, can make it for them, or make it stick against the wishes of the parties concerned.

There are signs of hope. The peace process that began in Madrid more than a year ago may not have achieved as much as the optimists hoped. But nor has it proven a failure, as the pessimists feared. As far as we can see, the peace process is firmly on track. That, in the volatile Middle East, is in itself an achievement. It is clear that, after 40 years of bitter conflict, peace will not be achieved at the stroke of a pen.

My Government fully supports the Middle East peace process as the best available means to reach a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the region. Finland appeals to all the parties concerned to show flexibility and far-sightedness. They have a common interest in a just and lasting peace. We are encouraged by the willingness of the new Government in Israel to contemplate options that not long ago were branded unthinkable.

The generally accepted principles for the peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict remain valid. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region should be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Acquisition of territory by force, even if in self-defence, is inadmissible. Israel must therefore withdraw from territories it occupied in 1967. But Israel, like any other State in the region, has the right to exist, not on sufferance but within secure borders that are recognized by its

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

neighbours and the world at large. For that to happen, the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to national self-determination, need to be respected.

Finland deplores all violence in the occupied territories. All sides should now show restraint. In that context, full respect by Israel for the Fourth Geneva Convention is of utmost importance.

There is clearly a need for confidence-building measures, within and outside the peace process. We welcome any type of freeze of settlement activities. In our view, Israel should go further and cease all settlement activities in the occupied territories. They are, after all, illegal under interational law. On the Arab side, scrapping the trade boycott directed towards Israel and foreign firms dealing with Israel would be a necessary and timely confidence-building measure.

In the overarmed Middle East, confidence would also be enhanced by adherence by the States of the region to international instruments on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the intention of Israel to become a party to the chemical weapons Convention, and call on its Arab neighbours to do the same. At the same, we fully realize that the cause of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East would be served by Israel heeding the repeated calls of the international community to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as most of the Arab States have already done.

While supporting the ongoing Middle East peace process, my Government also believes that the United Nations should become more involved, in accordance with the guidelines adopted in the peace process. The process,

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

which seeks in effect to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), should benefit from greater involvement by the United Nations, particularly since it is likely that any successful outcome of the peace process would involve a role for the United Nations in its implementation.

We therefore welcome the fact that the United Nations will now be involved as a full extra-regional participant in the multilateral talks. We also particularly welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to designate a senior official, Ambassador Gharekhan, to co-ordinate the United Nations role in the process.

In a broader sense, the extent of United Nations participation in the peace process also depends on the Organization itself. The more impartial the United Nations is perceived to be, the better its chances to play a role. It is therefore regrettable that many of the resolutions of the General Assembly on the Middle East seem stuck in a rut, routinely repeating the nostrums of past years. Fewer resolutions more in tune with the spirit of the peace process would be called for today.

At long last, peace in the Middle East has a chance. The peace process is under way. The parties to that process owe it to themselves to make the most of it, for their own good and for that of the world.

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): The question of the situation in the Middle East has appeared on the General Assembly's agenda for 45 years. The decades-long Arab-Israeli armed confrontation in that region, which has more than once taken the form of large-scale wars, convincingly demonstrated that it is impossible to solve th problems of the Middle East by force. Rejection of the futile and extremely dangerous stereotypes of the era of confrontation makes it possible to take a new view of the substance of the region's problems, from the standpoint of safeguarding the true interests of its countries and peoples and of the prospect of their peaceful and secure coexistence. Such an approach affords favourable opportunities for shifting from regional confrontation to political dialogue and negotiations on the acute and chronic problems of a Middle East settlement.

With the launching last year at Madrid of the peace process, which received the widest possible support from the world community, the effort to achieve a just and therefore lasting settlement of the conflict finally moved off dead centre. Today we can note with satisfaction that since then the parties, overcoming the psychological barriers that had separated them, showed a serious willingness to look for compromise solutions which would take account of everyone's concerns - that is, would be the result of finding a balance of interests which was based on the realities of today and aimed at the future. We hope that the participants and all interested parties will continue to pursue a realistic and constructive policy which could lead to peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

Seven rounds of direct bilateral negotiations between Israelis and Arabs, including Palestinians, the work of multilateral working groups and the participation of the Secretary-General's Special Representative indicate that

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

the peace process has taken on a dynamic of its own. Furthermore, they have shown that this is the only path that can bring realistic solutions of the Middle East tangle and lead to the secure coexistence of all the States of the region, to the realization of the national rights of the Palestinian people and, more generally, to the establishment of relations of good-neighbourliness and cooperation in the Middle East.

Is there any alternative to the peace process? We are firmly convinced that the answer is no - unless, of course, we consider a return to the policy of confrontation, which has already proved futile, to be an alternative.

The concrete conditions and the successive stages of the settlement must be determined by the parties on the basis of the principles laid down in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We in Russia welcome the steps taken during the past year to normalize the situation in Lebanon and move towards the implementation of the provisions of the Taif Agreement. We value highly the efforts being made by President Elias Hrawi in order to lead the country out of the state of crisis born of a civil war that has lasted many years. We in Russia are convinced that in addition to the pursuit of a sensible foreign policy within Lebanon itself, constructive participation in the Middle East peace process is an indispensable condition for restoring the well-being of Lebanon and extending the sovereignty of its lawful authorities to all of Lebanese territory. As shown by all past experience of Lebanese-Israeli relations the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) cannot be achieved through force, and we hope that the current negotiation process between Israel and Lebanon will make a real contribution to the complex of the Middle East settlement.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

The arms race in the Middle East has long been a factor that is increasingly destabilizing the already complicated situation in that region. Therefore it is very important to set out on the road of creating a stable security structure in the region. The priority directions of the efforts to be made in this matter are obvious - to guarantee that the Middle East becomes a zone free of all types of weapons of mass destruction and to reach collective agreements, with the participation of the purchasers and the main suppliers of weapons, particularly of offensive weapons, concerning a monitored reduction of the flow of arms to the region. It would unquestionably be useful to take initiatives aimed at strengthening mutual confidence and creating demilitarized zones and to adopt other preventive measures.

The world community must, by its actions, contribute to the creation of an atmosphere which would facilitate the successful conclusion of the negotiations. We are firmly convinced that this is the main task of this session of the General Assembly as well.

The Russian delegation welcomes the more constructive mood observed at this year's session of the General Assembly during the consideration of the whole complex of questions relating to the Middle East. Withdrawal of any draft resolutions which are not consonant with the realities of today or which deal with matters being discussed in the talks about a Middle East settlement could, in our view, help to strengthen that atmosphere.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

Russia, as one of the sponsors of the peace process, will continue its active efforts to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement in the Middle East.

We do not wish to minimize the complexity of the problems in the Middle East, but we are convinced that there are no problems in that region which are not susceptible of a civilized solution consonant with the aspirations and hopes of mankind as it enters the twenty-first century.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.